



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience

Subject: Accept and Appropriate Grant Funding from the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Community Phase 1 Grant

Meeting Date: June 24, 2025

Formal Title: Adopt resolution accepting unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$1,104,017 from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Community (BRIC) Grant program, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Adopt resolution accepting unanticipated revenue from the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Community Grant Program in the amount of \$1,104,017 into the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience budget; and
2. Authorize the Director of the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience to execute grant-related documents and activities.

Executive Summary

In January of 2023 OR3 submitted an application to the FEMA BRIC grant program for a phased project to deliver funding for public and private wildfire risk reduction activities. Phase 1 of the grant program which consists of environmental review and permitting processes, community outreach and project development was awarded in the third quarter of 2024. In early 2025, FEMA cancelled all BRIC Phase 2 awards which has eliminated the potential to implement this project as originally conceived. The Phase 1 grant award is still intact, however scope changes and performance period extensions are not expected. OR3 will utilize Phase 1 grant funds to the greatest extent possible. The goal will be to develop environmental permitting support documents and identify projects in the designated areas aligned with the original scope that will also provide the greatest opportunity to leverage these activities for future funding opportunities.

Discussion

The FEMA BRIC grant program made federal funds available to local communities for hazard mitigation activities. It did so with a recognition of the growing hazards associated with climate change, and of the need for natural hazard risk mitigation activities that promote climate adaptation and resilience with respect to those hazards.

FEMA provided financial assistance to eligible BRIC applicants for Hazard Mitigation Projects. The projects were required to be cost-effective and designed to increase resilience and public safety; reduce injuries and loss of life; and reduce damage and destruction to property, critical services, facilities, and infrastructure (including natural systems) from a multitude of natural hazards and the effects of climate change.

This BRIC grant program was highly competitive and had a lengthy approval process from FEMA. The County emulated BRIC applications from Sonoma, Napa and Nevada Counties and was working with them to replicate and learn from their Phase 1 processes, successes, and failures.

For context the original proposed activities designated for the \$20,000,000+ Phase 2 grant award were:

1. Private home hardening with ignition resistant materials (roof materials or siding, or both);
2. Develop defensible space & retain native plants around private homes;
3. Prepare shaded fuel breaks around Firewise communities to provide a green buffer by goat grazing, hand crews, and mechanical methods;
4. Remove flammable non-native trees and shrubs & restore habitat on private property;
5. Improve safety of private roads for evacuation through hazardous fuel reduction activities;
6. Improve safety of critical public road infrastructure for evacuation through hazardous fuel reduction activities; and
7. Educate citizens about their responsibilities for wildfire risk reduction.

While Phase 2 has been cancelled the County will utilize Phase 1 funds to develop important environmental permitting and project scope documents consistent with the original scope of work, a grant requirement, that can more broadly be used for future hazardous fuel reduction work at the landscape and residential scale. By leveraging this grant funding OR3 still hopes to develop valuable tools that can be used with future local (Measure Q) or State (Prop 4) grant funding opportunities. OR3 will collaborate with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County and other partners to ensure alignment with other hazardous fuel reduction efforts.

Financial Impact

The total amount of unanticipated revenue to be accepted and appropriated is \$1,104,017. These funds will be appropriated into OR3's operating budget [GL186000/Object 41150] and expended in professional services [Object 62381 and OR3 staff time Object 51000], as detailed in the attached AUD-60 form.

The BRIC Program includes a 25% local match requirement for all eligible expenditures. While OR3 does not anticipate fully expending the awarded funds due to the constrained grant performance period, any portion of the grant that is utilized will require a corresponding 25% match contribution. OR3 anticipates meeting the match requirement through a combination of in-kind staff time from OR3 and the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, as well as costs incurred under a professional services contract that is being funded through a separate Cal Fire grant awarded to the County through the Phase 3 County Coordinator Grant program by the California Fire Safe Council.

This approach leverages contributions from external partners and existing grant-funded activities to satisfy the match requirement, minimizing the need for new County General Fund resources. It also reflects strategic coordination of state and federal funding streams to advance local resilience planning.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - Leadership, Operations & Services, Communications & Education
Operational Plan - Sustainable Environment
Climate Action - Wildfire Prevention

Submitted By:

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Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.